

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9729

INFO SECDEF

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 4654

LPE.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR SN

SUBJ: POSSIBLE APPROACH TO GOS RE REFUELING US MILITARY
AIRCRAFT AT TENGAH

REF: SINGAPORE 4620 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY

REFTEL REPORTED GOS HAD ADVISED SHELL THAT ALL AIRCRAFT
REFUELED UNDER DFSC CONTRACTS COULD NO LONGER BE FUELED
IN SINGAPORE. UK HICOM HAS ADVISED EMBASSY THAT LONDON

HAS NO OBJECTION IF US WISHES TO APPROACH GOS RE
POSSIBILITY OF PERMITTING US MILITARY AIRCRAFT
TRANSITING SINGAPORE TO REFUEL AT TENGAH RATHER THAN AT
CHANGI/A UNLIKE SITUATION AT ANZUK BASE AT SEMBawang
WHERE BRITISH CONTROL FUEL SUPPLY, SADC MANAGES FUEL AT
TENGAH ANFPUMPS DIRECTLY TO RAF PLANES. THERE
AVIATION FUEL COULD NOT BE SUPPLIED TO US AIRCRAFT AT TENGAH
WITHOUT GME KNOWLEDGE AND PARTICIPATION. WHILE GOS MIGHT
POSSIBLY AGREE TO ALLOW VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT TO

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REFUEL AT TENGAH FOR ESSENTIAL OPERATIONS, BELIEVE DEPT./DOD

SHOULD WEIGH CAREFULLY IMPORTANCE OF US MILITARY AIRCRAFT TRANSITING SINGAPORE AGAINST RISKS DESCRIBED BELOW BEFORE AUTHORIZING APPROACH TO GOS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON NOVEMBER 29 DCM ADVISED BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER WATTS THAT GOS AND SHELL HAD INFORMED EMBASSY US MILITARY AIRCRAFT COULD NO LONGER BE REFUELED AT CHANGI. (WE UNDERSTAND FROM LOCKHEED THAT GOS MAY MAKE AN EXCEPTION FOR MILITARY FLIGHTS ARRIVING FOR REPAIRS OR BRINGING IN SPARE PARTS FOR LOCKHEED AIR SERVICES SINGAPORE (LASS)). DCM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR UK ASSISTANCE IN BUNKERING AND REFUELING USN SHIPS AND STRESSED THAT WE WOULD NOT WISH TO DO ANYTHING TO JEOPARDIZE THIS EXCELLENT ARRANGEMENT. HOWEVER, US MILITARY AIRCRAFT HAD TO TRANSIT SINGAPORE OCCASIONALLY AND REFUEL IN CONNECTION WITH 7TH FLEET AND OTHER OPERATIONS. SINCE SHELL FUEL NOW UNAVAILABLE, DCM ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR PLANES TO COME INTO TENGAH AND DRAW FUEL FROM RAF STOCKS.

2. ON NOVEMBER 30 WATTS INFORMED AMBASSADOR AND DCM THAT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO REFUELING AT TENGAH WAS CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT FROM FUELING ARRANGEMENTS AT ANZUK BASE AT SEMBAWANG WHERE FUEL WAS LARGELY UNDER BRITISH CONTROL. HE STRESSED THAT TENGAH IS SINGAPORE BASE AND THAT SADC MANAGES FUEL SUPPLY INCLUDING ALL PUMPS AND FUEL TRUCKS. RAF DOES NOT HAVE ITS OWN STOCK OF FUEL, OBTAINS ITS REQUIREMENTS DIRECTLY FROM SADC PUMPS AND TRUCKS AND IS BILLED MONTHLY BY SADC. HE SAID FUEL CAPACITY AT TENGAH IS 456,000 GALLONS WITH MONTHLY OFF-TAKE AVERAGING 850,000 GALLONS OF WHICH RAF NORMALLY TAKES ABOUT 600,000 GALLONS. ALTHOUGH RAF DOES NOT HAVE REGULAR MONTHLY ALLOCATION OF FUEL, IT HAS JUST RECEIVED OMINOUS REQUEST FROM SADC FOR REPORT OF MONTHLY OFF-TAKE FOR PAST 12 MONTHS AND ESTIMATE OF NEEDS FOR NEXT 6 MONTHS.

3. WATTS COMMENTED THAT GIVEN ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR US MILITARY AIRCRAFT TO OBTAIN FUEL AT TENGAH WITHOUT DIRECT PARTICIPATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOS. HICOM SUBSEQUENTLY CHECKED MATTER OUT WITH
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LONDON WHICH SAW NO OBJECTION TO US SOUNDING OUT GOS DIRECTLY IF IT WISHED TO DO SO. HOWEVER, FOREIGN OFFICE ADDED PROVISIO THAT IT WOULD NOT WISH AMOUNTS SUPPLIED TO REDUCE SIGNIFICANTLY AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR RAF.

4. COMMENT: AT PRESENT MOMENT GOS HAS NO OBJECTION TO US MILITARY AIRCRAFT LANDING AT SINGAPORE AIRPORTS PROVIDING

THEY DO NOT REFUEL. HOWEVER, GIVEN ARRANGEMENTS DESCRIBED

ABOVE, IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT USE OF TENGAH TO REFUEL US MILITARY AIRCRAFT WOULD SOTP BECOME KNOWN AND WOULD PROBABLY PUT GOS IN DIFFICULT SITUATION IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ARAB COUNTRIES. UAR EMBASSY HERE IS KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON USE OF SINGAPORE FACILITIES BY US MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO PROTEST IF ALL US MILITARY FLIGHTS (OTHER THAN THOSE DIRECTED TO LASS) WERE SWITCHED FROM CHANGI TO TENGAH AND RECEIVED FUEL THERE. IF SADC SENT FUELING BILLS TO RAF INSTEAD OF TO USAF, THIS WOULD BE VIEWED AS OBVIOUS SUBTERFUGE. THEREFORE, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS UNLIKELY GOS WOULD AGREE TO US PROPOSAL TO SWITCH ALL MILITARY FLIGHTS (OTHER THAN LELS) FROM CHANGI TO TENGAH AND REFUEL FROM SADC PUMPS. FUTHERMORE IF GOS DID AGREE AND ARRANGEMENTS BECAME KNOWN AND LED TO

EXPOSURE AND STRONG ARAB REACTION, IT MIGHT JEOPARDIZE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS WITH UK FOR REFUELING US WARSHIPS FROM BUNKERS UNDER ITS CONTROL AT SEMBAWANG.

5. IN CONSIDERING POSSIBLE APPROACH TO GOS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT DEPT/DOD WEIGH MOST CAREFULLY WHETHER IMPORTANCE OF US MILITARY AIRCRAFT CONTINUING TO TRANSIT SINAPORE IS WORTH RISKS DESCRIBSS ABOVE. ACCORDING AIRATT RECORD DN AVERAE OF APPROXIMATELY 14.2 US MILITARY AIRCRAFT HAVE USED SINGAPORE AIRDROMES (CHANGI, SELETAR AND OCCASIONALLY PAYA LEBAR) EACH MONTH DURING PAST 6 MONTHS. OF THIS NUMBER AN AVERAGE OF NINE PER MONTH HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH LASS OPERATIONS. (GOS MAY BE WILLING TO ALLOW THESE AIRCRAFT TO CONTINUE TO USE CE NGI ON GROUNDS THAT THEY SERVE A SINGAPORE CORPORATION).

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A MONTHLY AVERAGE OF 1.8 FLIGHTS HAVE BEEN FOR 7TH FLEET SUPPORT, 1.5 FOR VIP VISITS, 0.5 FOR AIR EVAC AND 1.3 DDR OTHER PURPOSES. OVER MONTHLY PERIOD THESE FLIGHTS HAVE TAKEN ON AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT 6,650 GALLONS OF FUEL PER MONTH.

6. BELIEVE THERE IS NO NEED TO SEEK GOS APPROVAL FOR AIR EVAC AND OTHER EMERGENCY EXCEPTIONS SINCE THESE ARE PRESUMABLY COVERED BY STANDARD INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE. GOS MIGHT POSSIBLY AGREE TO ALLOW VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF FLIGHTS REQUIRING REFUELING IF US UNDERTOOK TO RESTRICT THESE TO ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL OPERATIONS.
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